

March 17, 2020

Dear Childcare Licensees/Managers:

Re: Update on COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

We are writing to give you updated information on the novel coronavirus causing respiratory illness (COVID-19) and inform you of new measures and guidance.

While a number of infections were previously reported among returning travellers, and international travel remains a risk factor for COVID-19 infection, local community transmission in BC has also been observed at low levels.

Our knowledge of this virus and outbreak continues to grow, and we are using new information to adjust our public health recommendations. While most people (particularly children) experience mild illness, COVID-19 virus can cause a range of symptoms, and it is possible that people will not recognize symptoms that are very mild. During this time, people can reduce the chance of spread by limiting contact with others.

Generally, children with colds may attend childcare facilities. Because children with COVID-19 are expected to have mild-symptoms, **children or staff with any respiratory illness (including colds) must be sent home. Symptomatic staff and children should isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms.**

Public Health advice for children/parents and staff

- The BC Ministry of Health recommends against all non-essential travel outside of Canada, including the United States.
- Effective immediately, anyone who chooses to travel outside of Canada will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days upon their return, staying away from settings including work, school and child care.
- Children or staff who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 are asked to stay home for 14 days after their last encounter. Individuals should monitor themselves daily for symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath and sore throat.
- **Children or staff who develop symptoms should stay home and self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset. COVID-19 testing for mild symptoms is not required as it will not influence how people are treated. People with severe or rapidly progressing symptoms should call their health-care provider or 8-1-1 for a phone assessment.**
- If there has been a COVID-19 exposure in a child care setting, public health will contact the relevant facility to discuss next steps.
- It is not necessary to cancel childcare facility events, outings or field trips to public locations that are still open. (Note that in BC, gatherings with over 50 people are not allowed at this time.)

We would also like to take this opportunity to provide the following recommendations to enhance protection for your facilities at this time:

- Immediately begin **enhanced cleaning** of high touch surfaces, at least two times per day in line with typical practices during an outbreak of respiratory illness (examples include door knobs, tables, faucets, etc.).
- Handwashing is the best way to prevent infection and should be routinely practiced by children and staff, particularly before eating.

If you have concerns, including those regarding an individual case, please contact a Medical Health Officer at 604-675-3900 or the dedicated BC COVID-19 information line 1-888-COVID19 (text 604-630-0300).

Additional information can be found at:

BC Centre for Disease Control

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_schools_childcare_guidelines.pdf

Vancouver Coastal Health

<http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>

Sincerely,



Michael Schwandt, MD MPH FRCPC
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